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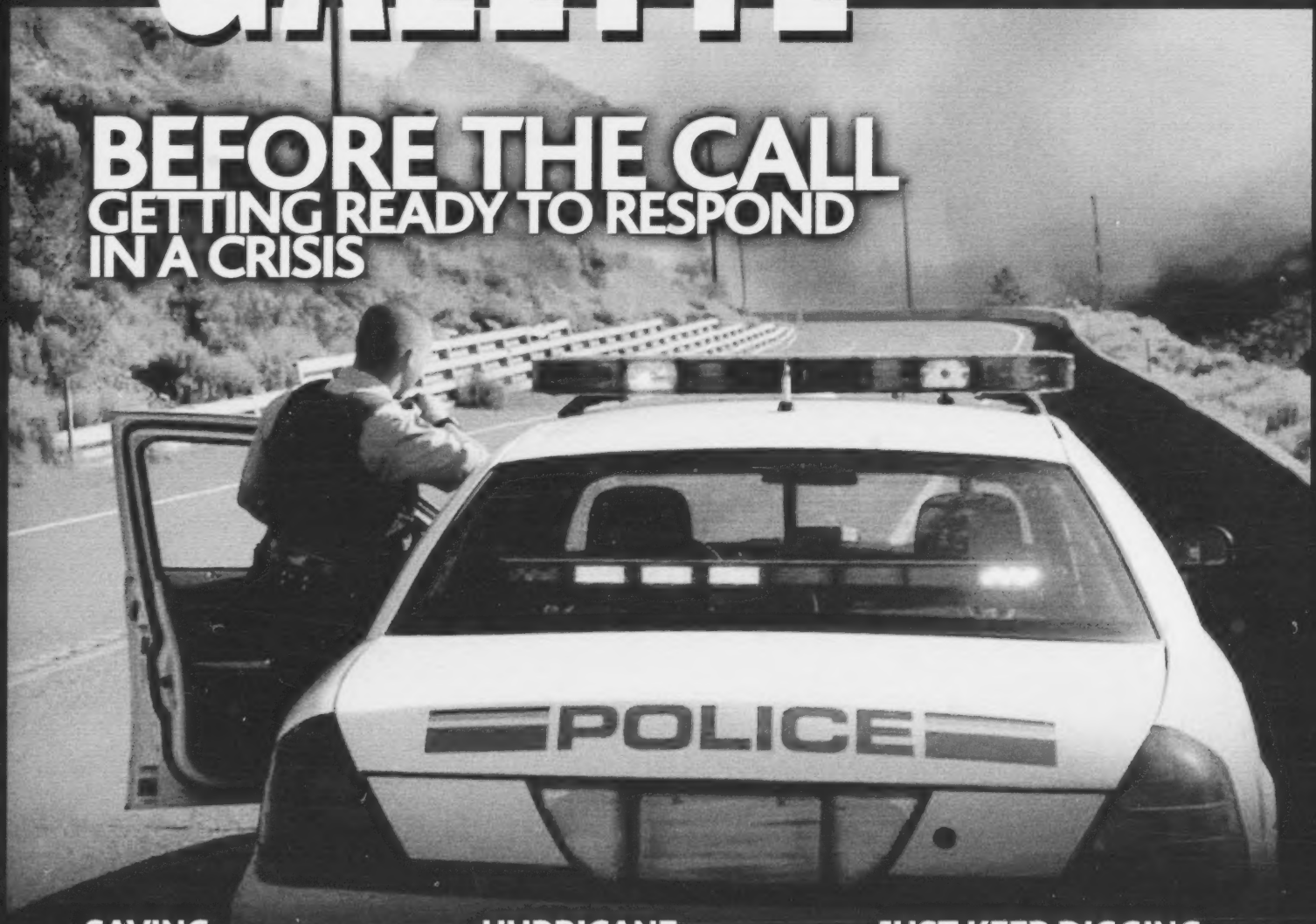

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Vol. 79, No. 2, 2017

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police Publication

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An RCMP officer reacts to an approaching forest fire in northern B.C. While it's impossible to prepare for every aspect of an emergency, planning ahead supports a more co-ordinated, confident response.
Photo: Leann Parker, RCMP

EDITORIAL MESSAGE

READINESS ISN'T BUILT IN A DAY

Cst Patrick Fehlmann

I didn't see it coming. I never thought that would happen here. I can't believe it.

Comments like these are common after a critical incident or natural disaster. Even when there's some element of warning, none of us can be prepared for every aspect of the next emergency. But being ready to respond to the best of our ability is possible. If we start today.

In this issue of *Gazette* magazine, we look at what it takes to plan ahead, react with skill and confidence, and improve for the next unthinkable event.

For our cover story, Amelia Thatcher looks at what it took to evacuate Fort McMurray, Alta., when smoke and flames took over the city, and how key preparation beforehand helped keep responders resilient and provided order in chaos.

In the First Nation community of Chateh, Alta., a disaster training exercise payed off when, a few months later, the reserve was evacuated during a major flood. Thatcher describes how this emergency planning exercise — a first for an Alberta First Nation — helped eliminate confusion and improve self-sufficiency during the real event.

Mother Nature is a formidable force. Deidre Seiden writes about the well-coordinated planning and response by Canadian police when Hurricane Matthew tore through Haiti. From pre-storm communication to post-hurricane foot patrols, those serving on mission were ready to weather what came their way and act quickly in the aftermath.

No matter where it occurs — a school, an office or a place of worship — an active shooter event provides little to no time for planning. And co-ordinating an immediate response, whether it's one officer or an entire detachment, will test even the most prepared.

Learn about the RCMP's Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) training at Depot. This mandatory course teaches operational members as well as cadets how to subdue an active threat through realistic scenarios.

Responding to a school shooting involves many players. The RCMP's Operational Readiness and Response Unit in New Brunswick recently held a multi-agency exercise in an empty high school to test interoperability between front-line responders. The scenario allowed everyone to practise, debrief and discuss how to improve.

As a police force, our place of work can become a target for violence. RCMP in Quebec have created a video and other tools to prepare operational police and civilian employees for what to do if a shooter enters their building. Not surprisingly, IARD and employee awareness feature prominently.

You can also read about emergency planning in vulnerable populations, co-ordinating pet and livestock evacuation, maintaining mental health during an emergency, and crisis communications.

Few want to think about preparing for these incidents, but as one RCMP officer in IARD training points out, "we have to think about it — because it's our job." ■

— Katherine Aldred

GAZETTE

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DRUG APP A USEFUL TOOL FOR YOUTH, PARENTS

By Deidre Seiden

Two years ago, the RCMP in Quebec's Drug and Organized Crime Awareness Service (DOCAS) and Communications Office developed an app that would serve as a credible source about drugs. Since then, it's been downloaded more than 19,000 times on Google Play and the Apple App Store.

The free app, called Drugs and New Trends, provides instant access to information about a wide range of substances, how they're consumed and produced, facts and myths, how to prevent drug use and a list of contacts to get help by province.

One of the sections is for parents, says Sgt. Michelle Harvey from DOCAS. In this section, parents can get tips on how to engage in a conversation about drugs with their children as well as signs and symptoms that may indicate drug use.

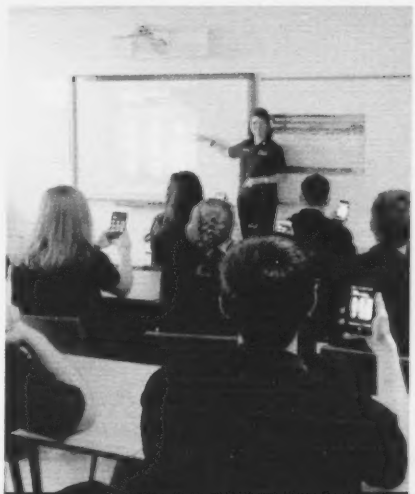
"Our role is to protect people," says Harvey. "We put all of our knowledge into one app to answer the questions that people always ask us. The better informed people are, the better we can protect them and the better decisions they make."

The app was developed as part of a drug awareness campaign in Quebec. DOCAS had created several tools that were popular with their policing, health services and education partners, but the communications office suggested they extend their reach, says Natasha Karok, with the RCMP communications team in Quebec.

"We were looking for a way to reach out to youth," says Karok. "The app was our way to do that, but we realized that it gave us the opportunity to reach a much larger audience including parents, school teachers and media."

Nancy Bélanger is a police foundations teacher at La Cité, a francophone college in Ottawa. She uses the app in her classroom.

"I'm always looking for new tools to use when I teach," says Bélanger. "When this arrived, I thought it was excellent because I can use it to teach students about organized crime and drugs and their effects, and they can keep it as a reference guide — one that's in their pocket." ▪



Courtesy of Nancy Bélanger

Police foundations teacher Nancy Bélanger says the RCMP Drug and New Trends app is an excellent reference guide for her students.

TWEETS GIVE MURDER VICTIM A VOICE

By Deidre Seiden

On Oct. 16, 2016, 15-year-old Kerrie Ann Brown tweeted throughout the day like a typical teenager when she took over the RCMP Manitoba Twitter account. Only she isn't typical — she's been dead for 30 years.

Brown was raped, beaten and murdered in Thompson, Man. Her murder remains unsolved. The RCMP used Twitter to give her a voice and breathe new life into the cold case.

"We knew the 30th anniversary of her murder was approaching and I felt a news release really didn't do justice to her story," says Robert Cyrenne, director of Communications and Media Relations, Manitoba RCMP. "We came up with a unique way to share who she was to generate interest in the investigation 30 years later."

After speaking with her family and the investigator, Cyrenne and Letisha Sherry, the social media specialist on his team, wrote multiple tweets in Brown's voice about the last day of her life.

She tweeted about her favourite teddy bear, her love for gym class and eating dinner with her family.

That night, she went to a party with her friends. She writes about having a great time, but then someone showed up who she didn't like. She and her friend decided to go for a walk and talk about it.

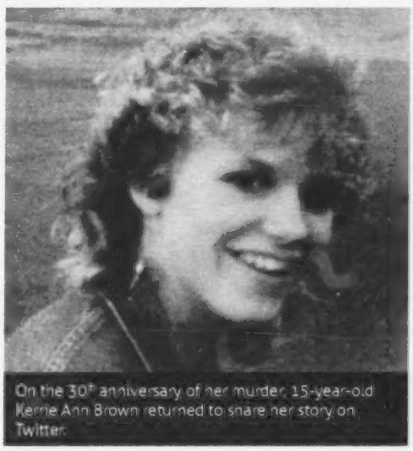
They were at the back door when her friend ran back in to tell people what they were doing. Brown stepped outside to wait. She wasn't seen alive again.

"She was with someone from the moment she woke up to the moment before she disappeared," says Cst. Janna Amirault, the RCMP investigator on the case. "It was probably about a five- or 10-minute period of time that she was by herself. It could have happened to anybody."

The Twitter campaign was a success, says Amirault. She received several tips, including new information to follow up.

She also hopes the attention Brown's Twitter story received by the media and retweeted more than 2,000 times reached the killer(s).

"If the suspects are still alive, they should feel the pressure," says Amirault. "They've taken a life. They should have some discomfort until they are held responsible for what they've done." ▪



Courtesy of Letisha Sherry, RCMP

On the 30th anniversary of her murder, 15-year-old Kerrie Ann Brown returned to share her story on Twitter.

STUDY ADDRESSES SLEEPLESS COPS

By Amelia Thatcher

The mention of working a graveyard shift is enough to make any police officer yawn. Long hours, late nights and responding to stressful calls can be a recipe for fatigue among front-line officers.

Fiona Vincent, manager of the Fitness and Lifestyle Unit for Saskatchewan RCMP, realized this issue likely affects many RCMP officers in detachments across the province. So in 2015, she decided to investigate.

To determine the scope of fatigue in Saskatchewan's RCMP detachments, Vincent reached out to Dr. Charles Samuels, a sleep physician. They recruited researchers from the University of Calgary and Washington State University, and launched a two-year Sleep Management Program.

"Policing requires that members do shift work, and shift workers don't get enough sleep," says Samuels, who has researched fatigue in the Calgary Police Service and the Toronto Police Service. "It creates an ongoing state of jet-lag."

The program included a three-hour fatigue training session, along with a survey for members to take before the session, and six weeks after. The goal was to determine how many RCMP officers were fatigued, and if training could help reduce that fatigue.

"I've been a police officer long enough to know that sleep can be a rare commodity," says S/Sgt. Darren Simons, the Carlyle, Sask. detachment commander who participated in the study. "It was learning the little things like when to best grab a nap, or when to have caffeine that really helped."

After two years of work, the researchers determined fatigue was very high within the RCMP — only 20 per cent of members surveyed were satisfied with the sleep they were getting. They also found that intervention (in the form of the training session) did make a difference in officers' sleep habits.

After taking the training, Simons saw the value in adopting a more sleep-friendly environment. Last year, with support from the fitness and lifestyle unit, he bought a nap chair and couch for his detachment.

"We carry guns, we're expected to make life-and-death decisions so being alert and cognizant of our environment is very important," he says. "If you get a good night's sleep, you can do a lot."

The Sleep Management Program wraps up in spring 2017, when it will be reviewed for continuation. ■

VIRTUAL SHOOTING HELPS POLICE IN HAITI

By Amelia Thatcher

In Haiti, bullets are a precious commodity. Police officers are responsible for buying their own ammunition, which can limit the amount of firearms training officers receive.

"The things we take for granted in our training sessions in Canada — like munitions — aren't as accessible here," says Cpl. Daniel Laberge, an RCMP peacekeeper on his third deployment to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

For the past year, Laberge and Sgt. François Dubeau from the Sûreté du Québec have worked with the Haitian Coast Guard — a branch of the Haitian National Police (HNP) — to help them improve their firearms skills.

With no budget for ammunition, the pair had to get creative. Using a little bit of ingenuity and their own funds, they created a virtual shooting simulator to help local officers practise their firearms skills.

"I feel like a MacGyver," says Dubeau, who's also on his third MINUSTAH mission. He helped come up with the idea, and paid for all the parts of the simulator. "It's my way of investing in the HNP. It's exhilarating and gratifying to feel like you've accomplished something for these people."

The virtual shooting simulator used by Haitian National Police replaces the need for expensive ammunition, and reduces the cost of firearms training by up to 98 per cent.

Cpl. Daniel Laberge, RCMP

The virtual shooting simulator can be used inside and outdoors, allowing officers to practise realistic firearm encounters. A laser cartridge is fitted into the barrel of an officer's firearm, and a computer program measures the accuracy of each shot on a paper target.

The simulator is easily transportable and costs about $1,000 — much less than providing munitions to the entire coast guard for training.

"It's low cost and a good way to improve officer skills," says Laberge. "This system will improve safety, security and aim so that when an officer takes out their weapon, they make the right decisions and shoot more accurately."

Laberge and Dubeau are now taking this technology beyond the coast guard, offering it to the HNP training academy. They hope to set up more simulators for basic recruit training and firearms instructor training.

"Instead of going through boxes and boxes of bullets, they can hone their skills on this tool," says Laberge. "Every HNP officer in the country can benefit from this — from the street cop to specialized police officers." ■

Chris Schwarz, Government of Alberta

All 136 members of the Wood Buffalo detachment responded to the Fort McMurray fires, evacuating 88,000 residents in six hours.

SAVING FORT MCMURRAY

HOW POLICE EVACUATED A CITY, AND STARTED PREPARING FOR NEXT TIME

By Amelia Thatcher

On May 1, 2016, the Wood Buffalo RCMP detachment was bracing for a disaster. Two massive forest fires burning north and south of Fort McMurray, Alta. were slowly creeping towards the city.

Supt. Lorna Dicks, the acting detachment commander at the time, knew how quickly wildfires could spread, and she wasn't taking any chances. Based on the latest updates, an additional 10 police officers from the detachment were called out to work overtime on every shift, 24-7, in the neighbourhoods closest to the fires.

"Calling officers in, getting them suited up and ready to be deployed would take 45 minutes, whereas having those extra members already there, it's only a couple-minute response," says Dicks. "We wanted to have extra boots on the ground so that in the event of an evacuation, we could get people out as fast as we could."

The detachment activated its emergency operations centre — a boardroom turned operational hub — and stationed an RCMP officer in the Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC) to relay information about the fire to the detachment.

Over the next few days, the Wood Buffalo detachment, which serves Fort McMurray, worked on high alert, with their eyes on the approaching clouds of smoke. It wasn't until 2 p.m. on May 3 that the fire became out of control. The REOC declared a citywide evacuation, and the RCMP started the work of getting people out safely.

Dicks immediately called out all 136 RCMP officers in the detachment on mandatory overtime.

"When they responded to the call, they left their homes behind," says Dicks. "They didn't even have a chance to go back and pick up anything. They gave up everything they had to get the public out."

A month before the massive wildfire swept through Fort McMurray, the Wood Buffalo detachment went through a preparatory exercise for exactly that disaster. The detachment made a contingency plan outlining what would happen if a fire destroyed one of the two detachment buildings in the city.

Supt. Rob McCloy, detachment commander at the time, wanted to make sure police operations wouldn't deteriorate if they lost one of the police buildings and the resources within it.

"We made sure all equipment was doubled up and all procedures were put on paper so everyone would understand what to do," says McCloy. "It was to preserve operations."

The detachment also cut a third set of keys for each police car and made sure both buildings had a key for each car in the fleet. This would ensure the RCMP wouldn't lose the opportunity to use the cars if they lost the building.

"It's kind of scary that we thought about it just weeks beforehand. I never expected it to become reality so soon," says McCloy. "But, we didn't plan for both buildings to go. You can't plan for that sort of thing."

ALL HANDS ON DECK

After Dicks made the mandatory overtime call-out to all local RCMP officers, she stationed several experienced officers in the detachment's emergency operations centre. There, they co-ordinated resources and sent out communications to all officers on the ground. They also connected with the regional and district emergency operations centers to get regular updates on the fires.

Although Fort McMurray has experienced natural disasters such as floods and fires in the past, it was never to this extent. Insp. Mark Hancock, the incident commander that day who was stationed in REOC, says everyone took on roles and did the best they could.

"We had those systems set in place so as soon as members were called in, we were giving them cars and telling them where to go. It was one community after another," says Hancock, describing the evacuation. "The training we had really created some semblance of order in this situation."

But, the detachment still ran out of cars and radios — something that didn't surprise Dicks. The detachment isn't built to have an entire fleet of 136 police officers on duty at the same time.

"During the first day, there was little way to avoid the chaos," says Dicks. "You can't say, 'let's keep an extra 50 cars on hand in case the city burns down.'"

The detachment is now revamping its contingency plans to improve the delegation of resources during a citywide evacuation such as this one.

The clogged radio channels were another struggle for the RCMP that day. As the sole method of communication between the operations centre and officers on the ground, it was hard to get messages through.

"No matter how much you're talking to people, you're never talking enough," says Dicks. "We needed to provide updates to our boots on the ground quicker."

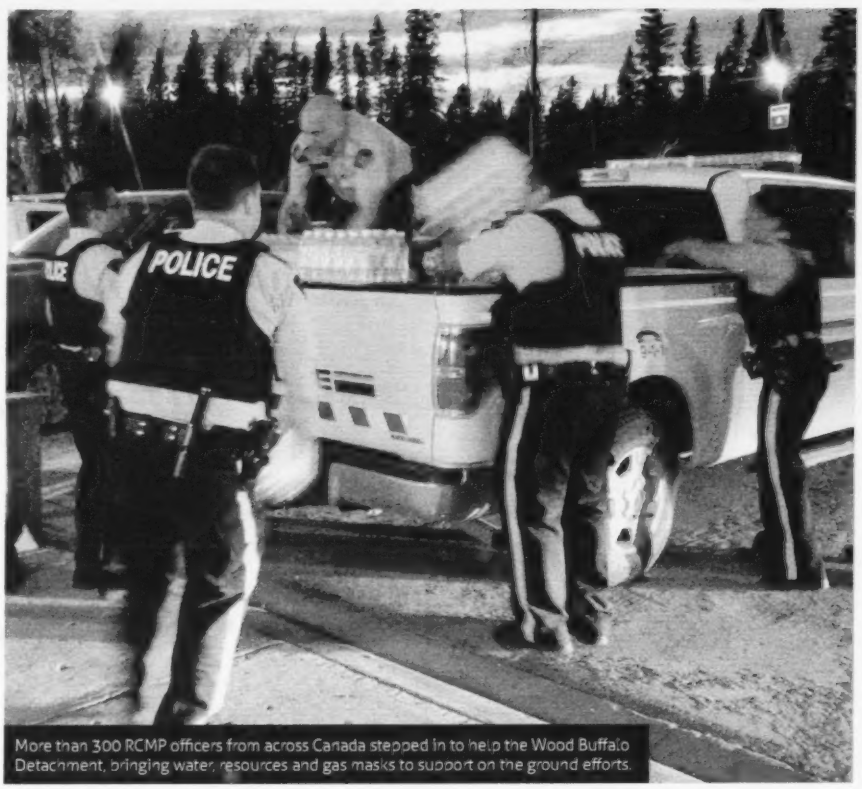
Dicks says the detachment is now looking at introducing a mass messaging system with all employee cellphone numbers and emails. That way, messages can be distributed to every single member, in real time, without having to wait for the radio lines to clear.

SMOKED OUT

By 10 p.m. the night of May 3, the city was empty. The local RCMP, along with munici-

Rene Hujot RCMP

The District Emergency Operations Centre in Edmonton co-ordinated the response of the RCMP, fire and municipal resources to safely evacuate residents and control the fires.



Rene Hujot RCMP

More than 300 RCMP officers from across Canada stepped in to help the Wood Buffalo Detachment, bringing water, resources and gas masks to support on the ground efforts.

A MENTAL HEALTH CHECKPOINT

By Amelia Thatcher

After four days of non-stop work evacuating and patrolling the burning city of Fort McMurray, all RCMP employees from the Wood Buffalo detachment were called to meet in Edmonton.

Alberta's commanding officer gave all 136 officers, and several civilian employees, two weeks of leave and instructed them to check in at a reception centre. There, RCMP doctors treated employees for smoke inhalation and any scrapes and burns, while a team of psychologists assessed their well-being.

"When you're affected by something and you police in that place, it's like a double whammy," says Dr. Barbara Schmalz, a psychologist with the RCMP. "They were flipping between being a first responder and being an affected regular citizen."

Schmalz and four other psychologists met with every employee for a 30 minute one-on-one chat about their mental health. They made sure all employees who needed help were connected with resources right away.

"Having that immediate, individual touch point in a disaster is key," says Schmalz. "If you build a rapport early, people don't have trouble picking up the phone down the road when they're struggling."

One week after that meeting in Edmonton, the psychologists touched base with each person again to assess who was ready to return to work. They helped those who were prepared reintegrate into the workplace, and kept the lines of communication open for those who weren't.

The psychologists are still visiting Fort McMurray on a monthly basis, helping employees cope and prepare for the one year anniversary of the fires in May 2017.

"People need to know what to expect so they know there's nothing wrong with them when they react a certain way," says Schmalz. "Especially police and first responders, who often feel like they should be able to handle anything."

pal law enforcement officers and firefighters, managed to evacuate all 88,000 residents of Fort McMurray in about six hours.

"When you see what all these people did in the field . . . it's unbelievable," says Hancock. "They were running and jumping over fences, knocking on doors, helping handicapped people out of houses — everyone has stories."

But the fires were still raging. Flames had surrounded the main RCMP detachment building, and Dicks made the call to evacuate her troops.

"When the smoke started pumping into the building, it was an easy decision to make," says Dicks, who has since become the detachment commander. "Having practised the detachment move, there was no confusion and no time for thinking twice."

Dicks evacuated the main building, moving police operations to the city's southern backup location.

"As much planning as we can do, you also have to be flexible and make decisions on the fly," says Dicks. "Nothing is ever going to go according to plan."

Within 24 hours of moving to the south Wood Buffalo RCMP facility, the detachment had to move again. The fires pushed the crew south, and they set up a temporary detachment in the hamlet of Anzac, 50 kilometres away. For many officers, it was their first chance to eat and rest in 36 hours.

Then, later that night, they were forced out by the fires again. The detachment moved posts five times in four days.

"I don't think there's any official training that can prepare you for that," says Dicks. "Hindsight is always going to be 20/20, it teaches you that we need to prepare even more for the next time."

AFTERMATH

On May 7, four days after the fires broke loose, all members of the Wood Buffalo detachment met in Edmonton where they were told to stand down and given two weeks off. More than 300 RCMP officers from across the country had arrived to relieve the exhausted officers.

McCloy and Alberta RCMP set up a reception centre to help organize the members. Hotels were arranged, financial services helped members who had lost their homes, and health services — including a team of psychologists — assessed each member's well-being.

The detachment also collected the personal emails and phone numbers of each employee to keep them updated during their time off. Their contact information will also be used to develop a communications plan for future emergencies, making the overtime call-out easier, and updates to members on the ground more frequent.

Before returning to work, all RCMP officers were assessed by a psychologist to make sure they were fit for duty.

"Officers were chomping at the bit to get back. My goal was to get them back into their regular rotations as soon as possible," says McCloy. "If they can get back to their schedule, they can get back to life."

Once the detachment was back in action, McCloy and Dicks held several debriefing sessions to get feedback from RCMP officers on the ground. Besides better communication, officers recommended having food stores within the buildings. Many worked in heavy smoke for 24 hours straight with little food and water. Now, both detachment buildings have stores of rations — enough to sustain all members for up to 72 hours. They're also getting a set of respiration masks for smoke in the event of another fire.

To date, most officers have returned to work, some have transferred detachments and some are still coping with the aftermath of the fires. The RCMP is currently in the process of recognizing the efforts of all RCMP employees who responded and provided support during the fires.

"Morale is really high here and it's a testament to members," says Hancock. "We're proactive, but we're also very good at reacting. No other organization could have done it better." ▪

Sgt. Dan Gaudet, RCMP

In the town of Jérémie, Haiti, police officers set off on a foot patrol to assess post-storm damage

THE EYE OF THE STORM

COMMUNICATION KEY TO SURVIVING HURRICANE IN HAITI

By Deidre Seiden

As an easterner, Sgt. Dan Gaudet had been through a couple of hurricanes in his day, but those storms didn't compare with what he experienced when Hurricane Matthew pummelled the coastal town of Jérémie, Haiti, where he was stationed.

On Oct. 4, 2016, Hurricane Matthew struck Haiti, devastating coastal areas in the northwest, southwest and south.

At the time, there was a contingent of 90 Canadian police officers stationed across the country as part of MINUSTAH, a United Nations (UN) mission to support the operations and development of the Haitian National Police (HNP).

Unlike the earthquake that struck the country in 2010, the UN and Canadian contingent had a few days warning to prepare for the Category 4 hurricane.

BRACING FOR IMPACT

Sgt. Rock Brunet with RCMP International Operations and Policing Development (IOPD) unit co-ordinated the mission from the operations desk in Ottawa. As soon as he heard that a large hurricane had formed in the Caribbean and was on track to hit Haiti, he did two things.

First, he referred to the RCMP's International Liaison Deployment Centre's critical incident plan (CIP), a guide of what to do in an emergency as IOPD oversees the deployment of Canadian police officers around the world.

"If there's ever a major event that takes place where we have our people, the CIP is the bible," says Brunet. "We follow it step by step, whether it's a terror attack, a political coup or a natural disaster.

Second, he sought advice from his co-workers who were working when the earthquake hit. He was told that good communication is critical.

"Hurricanes are unpredictable," says Brunet. "It was difficult for us to know where it was actually going to hit. This period leading up to it, we prepared for the worst and hoped for the best."

Brunet was the liaison between Port-au-Prince and the partner agencies the police officers worked for. He was in constant contact with the contingent commander, RCMP Insp. Lucie Dubois. Together they followed the CIP and were keeping the partner agencies and the officers' families informed.

While the UN was responsible for its police officers and any decisions about evacuation or lockdown, Dubois made sure her contingent had good communication, knew what to do and had what they needed.

"We had a system in place where everybody had to report in regularly, so I knew exactly where my Canadians were at all times and how they were," says Dubois.

She was also in communication with the UN operations centre and the chiefs of police for each police detachment in Haiti where Canadians were assigned.

Back in Jérémie, the mission was focused on preparations for the upcoming election, but Gaudet was also focusing on the approaching hurricane. He was in contact with Dubois in Port-au-Prince and his family and friends back home.

Gaudet, along with the other two Canadian and two American police officers who shared the same house, began emergency preparations. They gathered enough food and drinking water to last 48 to 72 hours.

cleaned up the yard, stocked up on fuel to run the generator, charged their laptops and cellphones, replaced all the batteries in their flashlights and made sure the town's only satellite phone worked.

And then they waited.

WEATHERING THE STORM

"Everything was at a standstill as we waited for the hurricane to go by," says Dubois. "Canadians were spread all over the country so everyone had a different reality."

The UN had ordered a lockdown, which meant police officers were to remain in their own shelters for the duration of the storm. Brunet felt confident they were safe because people in mission live in homes with the best construction of what's available.

Port-au-Prince was spared from the worst of the damage. Dubois had constant communication with Brunet in Ottawa and all of the regions in Haiti — except for Jérémie.

"I was worried, and it wasn't just the Canadians I was worried about, it was all our colleagues and the population," says Dubois. "The population is just so vulnerable that your heart is just being split in different ways."

As the storm intensified, Gaudet says he could see roofs being torn from houses and debris flying, but then the rain and sustained winds of 240 kilometres an hour made it so he couldn't see much of anything. "It almost looked like a snowstorm between the rain and debris," says Gaudet.

Water was pouring into the house and they could hear the solar panels fly off the roof. And at one point, the full water tanks on the roof were also ripped off.

After several hours, the winds died down as the eye of the hurricane settled over the area. Gaudet and the others went outside to assess the damage.

"You look around and everything is destroyed," says Gaudet. "But people were walking around like it's over. I was trying to tell them they needed to get back to their homes. Then the wind picked up and changed direction and it really started to rain."

The storm raged for several more hours before subsiding.

In Port-au-Prince and Ottawa, Dubois and Brunet began to figure out what equipment and supplies people needed.

Brunet was also looking into the possibility of post-traumatic stress, and potential infections, diseases and exposure to mould if homes were flooded.

"It became a matter of before we can care for others in the community, let's care for our people and make sure they're healthy so they can help others."

And they were still anxiously waiting for word from Jérémie.

It took several hours, but Gaudet was finally able to make a quick 10-second call using the satellite phone.

"Everybody breathed a sigh of relief when it was done because there were no Canadian police officer or UN police officer casualties," says Brunet. "They were safe on the ground."

But the challenges were just beginning.

THE AFTERMATH

"We made it through the storm, which was bad enough," says Gaudet. "But what I hadn't realized was that was the easy part. The hard part was yet to come — the aftermath."

In Jérémie, they organized a foot patrol the day after the storm as roads were impassable.

"We're walking and we're in the middle of the street and there were a couple of guys there," says Gaudet. "We asked, 'Where's your house?' And they said, 'You're standing on it.' People were in despair."

On the second day, Gaudet says the HNP and civilians made a plan to start clearing the road to the airport using chainsaws. "With a joint effort we had the 7-km stretch of road cleared by 6 a.m. on day three. That's basically when the first choppers landed so we could get some help."

NGOs, the UN, the U.S. military and helicopter after helicopter of food and supplies began flooding in, says Gaudet. And they had limited resources to manage it as the town was destroyed. There was no place to set up or house people.

"It was a logistical nightmare," says Gaudet. "We would get together daily to strategize. We realized quickly that security was key."

As humanitarian aid trucks were coming in loaded with supplies, desperate local residents would attack the convoys and loot them.

The hurricane caused the mission to switch to a humanitarian one overnight.

As of the end of January, Gaudet says the power has been partially restored in Jérémie as the infrastructure is still heavily damaged. Generators continue to provide power to businesses and some residences and the rebuilding process is slowly underway.

The UN reports that while the number of Haitians facing hunger has steadily declined since the hurricane, 1.5 million people are still food insecure.

Pre-hurricane, Gaudet's job was co-location with the HNP, going out on patrols with them and supporting investigations. Post-hurricane, he says that 90 per cent of his focus involves the safety and security of humanitarian aid convoys.

"Our people go in mission understanding their job can change in a moment's notice depending what the needs are on the ground," says Brunet.

And in the days and months after the storm, Canadian police officers helped in whatever way they could.

"They just got back on their feet and worked really hard," says Dubois. "Some areas were hit harder than others, but they did a great job everywhere." ■

Hurricane Matthew left destruction in its wake as it passed over Haiti.

Sgt. Dan Gaudet, RCMP

René Huot, RCMP

HOW CAN POLICE BE BEST PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES?

THE PANELLISTS

- **Insp. Mark Hancock, OIC Investigative Services, Wood Buffalo detachment, RCMP**
- **Chief Michael Kehoe, retired, Newtown Police Department, Connecticut**
- **Roxane Marois, chief psychologist, RCMP**

Responding to emergency incidents like natural disasters and shootings can be stressful on a number of levels. We know having the right tools and support on hand can help during the response and recovery. But how can first responders and other employees prepare ahead? We asked our panellists what they think police and support workers can do today to ready themselves for a crisis.

INSP. MARK HANCOCK

During the first week of May 2016, the City of Fort McMurray and surrounding area was home to one of the largest disasters in Canadian history. A massive wildfire burning near the city jumped the Athabasca River, causing the fire to rapidly burn out of control. The fire engulfed the city and burned several residential areas in succession. The entire city was placed on a mandatory evacuation order. The RCMP Wood Buffalo detachment, bylaw officers and sheriffs worked tirelessly to successfully get residents to safety, in less than six hours.

Due to local floods in 2013, the Wood Buffalo RCMP had already established an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) room within the detachment. During the wildfire, the EOC had a direct phone line to the municipal Regional Emergency Operations Centre (REOC). The EOC was used for incident command and was instrumental in organizing and executing the initial response and evacuation of the community. The REOC was able to quickly communicate messages to the detachment EOC about the communities being evacuated and the best routes to take.

Every detachment requires emergency operations plans. These plans outline the steps required for major events. They are to be updated, relevant and shared with detachment personnel. These plans are to be used as soon as possible during this type of incident, as this helps keep responses as organized as possible during periods of high stress.

Training and experience are very important when dealing with a large-scale incident. Mock disaster and high-level incident scenarios enhance every team's ability to respond to the real thing. Wood Buffalo detachment had run some mock scenarios and table-top exercises over the past two years and had trained several members in various incident command courses. This enabled members to set up an incident command environment and also establish logistical supports (food, water, lodging for responders) early.

The Alberta RCMP's Senior Management Team and the Wood Buffalo detachment held debriefings post wildfire, to discuss areas that could be strengthened.

Communication was at the top of the list. It's difficult to send enough information to all the members and teams involved in an incident of this magnitude. The Government of Alberta and RCMP in Alberta are working to establish the new Alberta First Responder Radio Communications System throughout Alberta, including Fort McMurray. This radio system is designed to support a co-ordinated approach to radio communications with all first responders.

Supplies are also something that can be prepared in advance. Wood Buffalo detachment now has four large locked metal bins that store enough food and water for 72 hours, as well as enough masks for the entire detachment.

The response to the Fort McMurray wildfires was largely positive. About 88,000 people were successfully evacuated. While reacting to an incident of this magnitude is essential, proactive preparation is key to ensuring that we respond in a more efficient manner when the next crisis comes.

CHIEF MICHAEL KEHOE (RET.)

Emergencies by their very nature are unforeseeable, dangerous situations that occur to communities and individuals. First responders such as police, fire and emergency medical services are typically the government representatives asked to respond with immediate, decisive action to mitigate loss of life, loss of property and injury to persons.

Police officers today receive an enormous amount of basic training to effectively deal with a wide range of complex situations they'll be asked to formally deal with. A great majority of the time, they successfully bring intensely complex and dynamic events to a beneficial close.

However, occasionally an emergency will happen that challenges the most veteran and experienced officer. It may be a situation where very little training and understanding exists. But oftentimes, it's something that an officer has been given some training in but didn't realize the immense intensity and challenges they would face.

To be best prepared for any emergencies, you must develop skills, abilities and competencies that can transcend all emergencies. Knowledgeable capacities developed through time on the job or the colloquial "on-the-job-training," only take an officer so far when reacting to and effectively maneuvering within the fields of horror, pain and heartache associated with a tragic crisis.

To be professionally prepared for any emergency, a person, especially a police officer, has to have the right mindset. Confidence combined with unique and specifically useful competencies will bridge many gaps that exist with dynamic, ever-changing and challenging events.

Police officers must take a personal interest on their own. Being engaged fully in the right mindset to be the best that you can be will go a long way in preparing yourself for an emergency. Therefore, a holistic approach is necessary not only for daily survival, but long-term health. Proper sleep and diet, and a rigorous exercise routine will lay a foundation for health well beyond retirement.

Just as important as the body is the mind or brain. Individually speaking, practising mindfulness or exercising the mind builds brain resiliency and improves work engagement thereby enhancing overall employee well-being and organizational performance.

Mental wellness programs or policies are essential for organizations to adopt internally. Employee Assistance Programs, peer to peer systems, yearly mental wellness "physicals" or checkups, a chaplaincy connection and limiting exposure to psychological trauma are a few foundational interventions that an agency can use to ensure healthy minds. Along with their family, these programs become an integral part of an officer's stable support system.

In the end, a law enforcement officer can be best prepared when he or she is trained properly, is in the proper mindset, practises mindfulness and has taken a personal interest in their mind and body.

ROXANE MAROIS

Dealing with emergency situations is part of the job for RCMP officers and employees. Responding to citizens in crisis, investigating violent crime scenes, identifying potential threats to national security, and tracking down an active shooter, our men and women have to be ready to face the unexpected.

Every situation is unique, yet there are issues and reactions that are consistent in all emergencies for which law enforcement can develop and improve resilience. From a psychosocial viewpoint, police officers and operational support personnel must be ready to respond straightaway, they must have the ability to deal with adversity/volatility/danger, and they must be able to bounce back in order to face new challenges.

It's possible to prepare psychologically for difficult situations: trust in yourself and your training, listen to yourself and others, be open to the ideas of others, be willing to change the way you do things, and believe you can grow even in adversity.

In addition to professional police training, we have several tools at our disposal to consolidate our trust in our ability to overcome challenges and be resilient. Resources include the RCMP's Road to Mental Readiness training, suicide prevention training, the online critical incident debriefing course, and sessions with RCMP psychologists in the aftermath of critical events. Seek out these resources as needed.

It's important to listen to your body, your thoughts and your feelings. Have your sleep patterns or appetite changed? Have you lost interest in your favourite pastime? Has your supervisor noticed you're making more mistakes? These are clear indicators that something is amiss.

Some people extol the virtues of visualization techniques, and others advocate the importance of physical fitness. Sometimes changing your habits can help: quit smoking, eat a more balanced diet, don't use alcohol as a crutch. Mental health professionals are also available to talk and support you through your personal and professional journey.

When you're thrust into an emergency and suddenly are no longer your usual stable self, it can be unsettling. You might feel shattered, cornered, unable to go on, extremely angry. To regain your footing, step back from the situation to make sense of it. In the aftermath of an emergency or crisis, for many, getting back to normal will happen on its own over the next few days.

Given their emotional attachment, family, friends and colleagues are often unable to be objective as you search for meaning and balance. For some, it may be necessary to talk to a professional, in a confidential setting, for objective advice on how to regain the ability to bounce back and face future emergency/crisis situations.

Consulting a mental health professional is a golden opportunity to learn, grow as a person and maintain resilience. There's no shame in reaching out to Employee Assistance Services, the divisional psychologist or community resources. It's important to take ownership of your mental health. ■

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

ACTIVE THREAT EXERCISE PROMOTES READINESS

By Deidre Seiden

Lockdown. Lockdown. Lockdown. This one word repeated three times sets an entire school in motion. Hallways are emptied, doors are locked and barricaded, lights are turned off, and students and teachers fall silent as they hide.

The fatal Columbine High School shooting in 1999 changed the way schools and police respond to an active shooter incident. Police recognized that a much faster response was needed.

"That was the initial major incident that we realized that we have to have a plan in place," says Julie Fraser with RCMP New Brunswick's Operational Readiness and Response Unit. "Now we have the SAFE (School Action for Emergencies) plan. We have to be proactive so we can be ready for emergencies, and react and respond in a more efficient way."

Lockdown activates the RCMP's SAFE plan, a computer database that gives first responders instant access to everything from school contacts, floor plans, aerial photos, maps, lockdown procedures and other site-specific information, including tactical considerations like where first responders can set up posts.

SAFE was launched nationally across the RCMP in September 2007. In 2010, when Fraser's unit was tasked with co-ordinating SAFE plans for New Brunswick, she wanted to promote the program by providing more awareness to front-line police officers.

"In order to make the SAFE plan more workable and meaningful, I decided to start conducting multi-agency SAFE exercises," says Fraser.

REALITY-BASED TRAINING

The most recent such exercise was held on Oct. 19, 2016, at an empty high school in New Brunswick.

A man with a gun entered the school through the front doors and opened fire. This action triggered Yves Coulombe, principal of Polyvalente Roland-Pépin, to announce a lockdown and simulate a call to 911, activating the school's SAFE plan.

"Even though it was a training exercise, it felt real," says Sgt. René Labbe, who's in charge of operations at the RCMP detachment in Campbellton, N.B. "The emotion of the police officers ran very high."

With simulated firearms in hand, RCMP officers arrived on scene, ready to stop the threat using their Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) training.

Actors played injured victims, lying on the floor, and teachers participated in the classroom lockdown procedures. "They could hear everything that was going on — the shots being fired and actors screaming," says Coulombe.

Students didn't participate in the scenario as the goal of the exercise was to test the interoperability between front-line responders and partner agencies.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Responding to a school shooting involves many players. So, in addition to the high school and the RCMP, the exercise also included the school district, local fire department, Ambulance New Brunswick, the City of Campbellton's Public Works, the regional hospital and the liaison Emergency Measures Organization.

Once the shooters were neutralized (there were two) and the building was pronounced cleared, the partners stepped in. Victims were rescued, triaged and taken to hospital.

The entire scenario, which simulated approximately the first 30 minutes of an incident, took about an hour from beginning to end, but planning it took three months. Besides co-ordinating the logistics, Fraser and Labbe also involved partner agencies from the beginning.

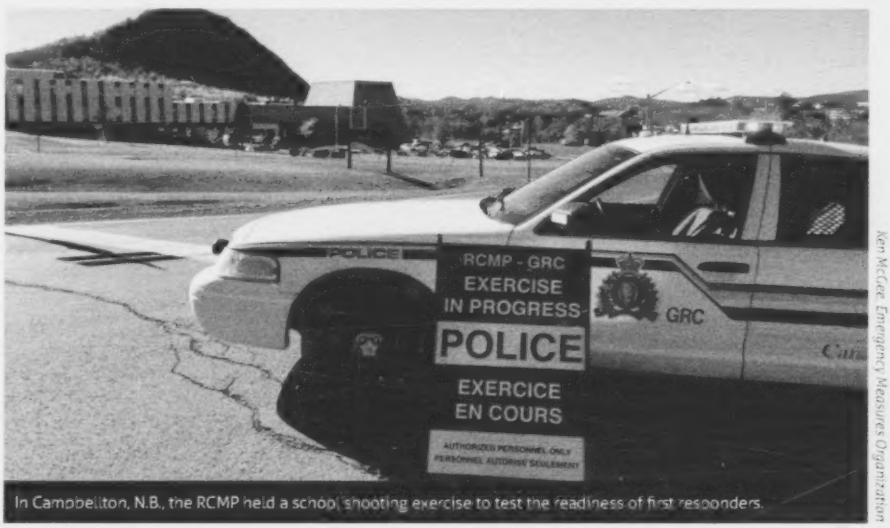
They held an orientation session and a tabletop exercise two weeks before the actual event to ensure all participants involved gained a mutual understanding of each other's roles and protocols.

And when the action came to an end, the participants were able to debrief and discuss each partner's role, how they responded and where they could improve.

"We ran this exercise to know if we're ready to answer this type of call and to prepare us should we ever have to answer this type of call," says Labbe. "The result was great. We know we still have some things to improve, but now we know what to work on."

While the high school runs a lockdown drill at the school with the students twice a year, Coulombe wanted to host the exercise to get an understanding of the SAFE plan and the front-line response.

"We have to make sure that the children and the staff in our school are safe from every threat," says Coulombe. "Now we feel like we're prepared because this experience made it real for us." ■



In Campbellton, N.B., the RCMP held a school shooting exercise to test the readiness of first responders.

Ken McGee, Emergency Measures Organization

STOPPING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER

TRAINING PREPARES OFFICERS TO CONFRONT THREAT

By Tanner Aulie

RCMP

During the RCMP's Immediate Action Rapid Deployment course at Depot, participants learn to negotiate hallways and perform room entries to pursue an active threat such as a shooter.

Emergency preparedness training must adapt to address the crises of our time. At Depot, the RCMP's training academy in Saskatchewan, Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) training has been updated to teach officers how to best respond to an armed active threat similar to those faced during the Mayerthorpe, Alta., Moncton, N.B., and La Loche, Alta., shootings. The training puts emphasis on making contact, confronting the threat and subduing it as quickly as possible.

IARD facilitators point out that in 90 per cent of these situations, the active shooter is stopped by a single police officer acting alone because there's no time to wait for backup. As IARD trainee Cst. Joanne Lauer says, "You can't wait. If you don't stop them, who will? You can't spend time thinking about whether or not you can or can't do it. You have a job to do."

IARD training is provided at Depot as part of mandatory one-week training for all RCMP officers. The required training also includes annual firearms qualification, first aid/medical emergency response training, occupational skills maintenance and road-to-mental-readiness training. IARD training is now also included in the cadet training program.

THREE DAYS TO READINESS

Last November, 28 RCMP officers returned to Depot for three days of the intense, hands-on IARD training.

For Lauer, who graduated just over three years ago, she's excited to return. "It's an honour to be here again," she says. "I'm here so that I can be the best police officer I can be for my brothers and sisters back at the detachment, for my family back home, and for my country."

Despite the gravity of what's being taught, the participants exchange lively banter and stories from the field. The light atmosphere is beneficial. Together these men and women will be learning how to act when the unthinkable happens and stop a threat from becoming catastrophic.

The trainees are split into teams and carry out various scenarios, each of which put them under significant stress. As a team, they learn to negotiate the hallways, perform room entries, work with rescue teams and control the space while pursuing the threat.

Armed at first with replica firearms, they build their confidence with the encouragement, guidance and positive feedback from the facilitators. As each scenario progresses, participants work on the areas they need to improve.

By the end of the first day, the trainees have grasped the basics. On the morning of the second day, they are given deactivated firearms with paint ammunition. The scenarios become more realistic.

"During these exercises, the point is to treat every trigger pull like it's a real trigger pull," says Cst. Fred Lillie, a 26-year veteran. "You have to breathe in, go over what you know, think about what you need to do and then do it."

At the end of the second day, most of the facilitators and trainees are covered in paint as they review the best and worst moments of their scenarios.

On the third day, the scenarios become even more complex. But everyone is responding well, cheering each other on and watching intently as their teammates move through the exercises.

The officers on course are evaluated according to their proficiency in the skills learned, the safe use of their firearm, and their ability to continue to communicate clearly while sustaining a high level of stress throughout the scenario.

"Any training is good training and practice makes you confident," says Cst. Anne Daly, an IARD trainee and officer for nine years. "These three days did prepare us to better protect the public from those horrible emergencies that no one really wants to think about. But we have to think about them because that's our job."

Even for facilitators, the training offers a way to stay on top of their skills, and give back.

"You're continuously bettering yourself with the intent of helping people who are going to be in the field," says Cpl. Traci Johnston, an IARD instructor at Depot. Those who have successfully completed the IARD user course and the Public and Police Safety Instructor course are encouraged to seek out opportunities at Depot to become trainers themselves.

After going through her last training scenario, Lauer feels positive: "I'm confident that if something happens in my community, I know I will respond. I'll be ready, and I'm going to win." ▪

RCMP

Two firefighters participate in a hands-on joint training exercise in Lethbridge, Alta., to better prepare for a mass disaster.

GETTING REAL

EXERCISE TAKES DISASTER RESPONSE TO NEXT LEVEL

Cpl. Jack Neri, RCMP Lethbridge Forensic Identification Services section, Alberta

Recent disasters in Canada and around the world have shown that all first responder agencies need to be properly trained and equipped to handle them. A question many emergency organizations ask themselves is, "are we ready to respond to this type of call in our community?"

Canada is fortunate to have the vast majority of its police, fire and ambulance services trained to very high standards. As recently seen in Alberta with the Fort McMurray fires, a natural mass disaster will put great pressure and strain on any organization assigned to protect its citizens.

Other non-natural disasters, such as an airplane crash with multiple fatalities, despite their rarity, will also challenge local authorities. One aspect of a mass disaster that's often overlooked is the recovery of the victims. Once the initial response is completed, police forensic teams are deployed to recover and identify the human remains, and to record any criminal evidence that may be present.

VICTIM RECOVERY

Dealing with deceased individuals is a common occurrence within the forensic identification community. However, dealing with multiple fatal casualties from a single incident makes this far more challenging. Specific training for Canadian forensic identification officers comprises a two-week classroom course in Ottawa at the Canadian Police College (CPC), but doesn't include hands-on training. Last summer, an actual training workshop was created to fill this gap.

Major disasters such as the 2004 South Asian tsunami, the 2010 Haitian earthquake and more recently the 2011 First Air Boeing 737 crash in the Canadian Arctic have shown the value of enhancing preparation, training and planning for police forensic teams here in Canada.

Specialized equipment is one factor to consider. Having a large motorized command-post vehicle may be suitable in an urban environment but not in a remote location with forested or mountainous terrain. As seen in the past, aircraft crash sites are often situated in challenging settings. Having access to large tents to act as an on-site command post, generators and other portable equipment may be worth having on inventory for agencies servicing non-urban areas.

The presence of hazards such as air-

borne carbon and fibreglass particles from the burnt fuselage of a newer model aircraft is one of the most dangerous threats found at crash scenes. Without access to the proper personal protective equipment (PPE), police responders and investigators' health and safety can be seriously affected from such exposure.

Forensic identification personnel also require specific training to deal with an incident of this type. From the scene examination to the management of the recovered remains, procedures need to be in place and practised prior to an actual incident.

Several years ago, INTERPOL recognized that the co-ordination and procedures of handling fatalities following a mass disaster greatly varied among member countries. In an attempt to provide a more universal, uniform response, new Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) policies and procedures were created.

To increase awareness of those procedures and policies among Canadian police, coroner and medical examiner agencies, the Southern Alberta Disaster Exercise (SADEX) was held in June 2016. The exercise provided a realistic, hands-on training opportunity for forensic and traffic collision reconstructionist officers to process a simulated disaster scene involving multiple casualties.

Police agencies from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario participated in the event. The Canadian Armed Forces also sent a team of forensic odontologists, who examine dental evidence, so their members could learn and share recommended practices in a mass disaster. As with any fatality, the medical examiner (and coroner in some provinces) is always involved in a disaster response, and they also participated at SADEX16.

Making the exercise as realistic as possible is key to ensuring that lessons of higher value are learned for the participants and organizers. To meet this goal, the organizers hired a private emergency preparedness company to supply prosthetics, props and guidance. Simulated bleeding cuts, burn injuries and protruding broken bones were placed on the actors playing the survivors to provide realism and increase the medical treatment challenge facing first responders.

As dismemberment is occasionally encountered in such incidents, an actor with an actual amputated leg was brought in to be among the victims. The actor wore a special prosthetic to mimic a violent injury.

An infant mannequin equipped with wireless remote control to activate the mechanical arms and pre-recorded crying noises was placed inside one of the two cars at the scene. Animal intestines and a bovine brain were added to some of the mannequins at the scene to expose first responders to realistic sights. Additional hazard factors included smoke from burning hay inside metal drums positioned around the crash site and the use of tactical flash bangs to simulate loud explosions.

THE SCENARIO

The first part of the exercise involved a commuter plane from Calgary experiencing engine problems while approaching Lethbridge. The plane never reached the airport and ended up crashing and colliding with an occupied transit bus and two private vehicles on a nearby highway. The crash resulted in the death of eight civilians (played by fully dressed mannequins) and 15 injured individuals (played by Victim Services Unit volunteers). A witness made a 911 call to the local emergency services resulting in firefighters and EMS personnel responding to the crash site.

The city's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) was activated to co-ordinate the response. Once the injured individuals were rescued and treated by fire and EMS staff, they were transported to the emergency room of the hospital via ambulances so that local medical authorities could test their own response in a mass casualty incident.

Once the 15 injured individuals were evacuated, the second part of the exercise — the recovery of the deceased victims — began. A team of forensic personnel comprised of police, military and medical examiner investigators were dispatched to the site to process and record the scene with ground and air photography, video and surveying.

The deceased (mannequins) were then removed and taken to a temporary morgue inside the RCMP inflatable shelters erected at the site to perform simulated field autopsies. Forensic odontologists from the Canadian Armed Forces also joined the police forensic teams, gained awareness for their potential role in this civilian context and demonstrated their operational capabilities if deployed in a DVI joint operation.

During the first day, and prior to processing the site, forensic officers and senior management observers gathered inside a large tent where they were presented with a slide show about past Canadian disasters and an outline of the procedures to follow. Topics included proper PPE, required equipment and personnel, the disaster victim recovery booklet, shift management tips and how to use INTERPOL's post mortem forms. Once completed, the candidates were divided into four teams, each composed of four forensic officers and one traffic collision reconstructionist. They were then sent out to the crash scene with instructions to process each vehicle location before moving to the next one.

On day two, the group searched the site on foot to log, record and recover any additional evidence such as personal effects (luggage and other items) left behind at the crash scene.

IMPROVING RESPONSE

The exercise allowed multiple police and emergency agencies to respond and successfully work together in the aftermath of a simulated plane crash. The use of an actual decommissioned 19-passenger airplane fuselage, a crushed transit bus, two cars and the associated debris field helped make the disaster site look authentic. The presence of actors displaying very realistic trauma injuries also enhanced the realism, allowing the responders to appreciate the stress associated with such working conditions.

Fire departments and EMS personnel later commented that the exercise would better prepare them for what to expect when responding to a real incident with multiple casualties. The forensic officers involved also indicated that they felt better prepared after this training session.

Some of the participating agencies have since taken steps to increase their operational capabilities by acquiring new PPE and a better awareness of scene and casualty management procedures. Areas requiring improvement in the operational response by the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), police, fire department, EMS and hospital agencies were identified during a post-incident general meeting and will help improve capability in future similar incidents. ■

Cpl. Jack Neri is an RCMP forensic identification officer in Alberta. He has been deployed to numerous major disasters including the First Air Boeing 737 crash in the Canadian Arctic in 2011.

'MORE PREPARED THAN YESTERDAY'

EMERGENCY PLANNING PAYS OFF FOR ALBERTA FIRST NATION

By Amelia Thatcher

Cpl. Martin Reed knocked on the door of a home in Chateh, Alta. The RCMP officer explained that a pipeline had burst, and the First Nation community was evacuating. The family had just five minutes to pack their bags.

While evacuations like this aren't uncommon in northern Alberta communities, this time was a little different: the emergency was planned and the evacuees were volunteers.

It was all part of a disaster training exercise co-ordinated by the Dene Tha' First Nation and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency last February 2016. The exercise in Chateh — one of three reserves in the Dene Tha' territory — was the first of its kind for an Alberta First Nation.

"We have different emergencies in different seasons," explains Andrea Godin, deputy director of emergency management for the Nation. "We're faced with flooding in the spring, forest fires in the summer and we're close to pipelines and oil wells so we want to be prepared if we ever have to evacuate."

Located 800 kilometres northwest of Edmonton, Chateh has been hit by several floods and fires in recent years. They've had to evacuate before, but never followed a structured plan.

"We had never assigned roles or practised what would happen," says Godin. "It slowed down the process because everyone was stopping to ask questions. But that's not practical in an emergency."

To improve the community's preparedness, the Dene Tha' emergency management team reached out to First Nation Field Officer Winston Delorme from Alberta Emergency Management. Together, they created a disaster plan and wrote a charter of delegations, which assigns roles to community representatives in the event of an emergency.

Then, Delorme led a week-long emergency management training session for all community stakeholders including the band council, community officials, RCMP, health services, fire, transportation and oil companies. The evacuation exercise was the last part of the training.

Andrea Godin, Dene Tha' First Nation

The Dene Tha' First Nation emergency management team answers questions from residents after the community was evacuated due to flooding.

"It helped bring partnering agencies together to understand the roles of everyone," says Godin. "We have something concrete to follow now. It eliminates the confusion, the frustration and the anger."

PLANNING PAYS OFF

Just a few months later, the community — and the new emergency plan — was put to the test. In June, heavy rains poured into the Sousa Creek near Chateh. Several logs had jammed the water flow and the creek was bursting at its banks.

Hours later, the roads were flooded with water and a meeting was called with the heads of the First Nation. Delorme, who works with 17 other communities, joined in by phone. They asked him if they should activate the emergency plan.

"I said 'yes', and told them to get the ball rolling," says Delorme. "The emergency was different but the evacuation was the same."

Delorme says his goal is to make communities like Chateh self-sufficient, so that when a disaster strikes, they can keep their residents safe.

"The training exercise was very beneficial because I didn't have to be there right away," he says. "I didn't have to organize or tell people what to do because they had already practised; I was just a support role."

The band council declared a local state of emergency, and the plan was put into action. RCMP were deployed to knock on doors and evacuate residents, road blocks were set up to mitigate traffic and limit access to flooded areas, and the local school was set up as a reception centre for evacuees.

Because of the flooding, 120 to 140 residents were displaced from their homes. They stayed at the school for 10 days, where they were fed and given regular updates about the status of the flood.

Reed says it's important for police officers to get to know community members before a disaster happens, to make the evacuation run smoothly and keep residents calm in the aftermath.

"Being posted to these smaller and isolated communities, you have to get out and meet people and partake in council meetings," he says. "It builds trust, so in the event of a disaster, you know who you're dealing with and how to best help."

Since the flooding in Chateh last June, Delorme says he's pleased to see more communities becoming engaged in emergency planning.

"They're setting up plans and holding meetings by themselves," he says. "They've seen what can happen and they want to be more prepared than they were yesterday." ▪

LEFT BEHIND

WILDFIRE CONFIRMS NEED FOR ANIMAL RESPONSE PLAN

By Deidre Seiden

Just days after a forest fire caused the evacuation of Fort McMurray, Alta., a truck with a horse trailer drove up to one of the road blocks guarded by the RCMP. Two men got out of the vehicle and approached the police.

Sgt. Jack Poitras, an RMCP media relations officer, overheard the conversation. The men had come to collect a horse that had been left behind. However, for safety reasons, people weren't allowed to re-enter the town without a police escort.

That morning in a briefing, Poitras learned that police officers were to assist with abandoned animals — if they could. And now he had an opportunity.

Poitras grabbed his partner, "I said to him, 'George, we have a mission,' " says Poitras. "If no one else could help those people get that horse out of there, we were going to."

The horse had already been moved once from a burned out barn, where it was found standing in a pile of ashes, and taken to a backyard downtown where it was thought the horse would be safe. But with the fire spreading rapidly, the owners were worried.

Poitras escorted the men to the horse — where they loaded it onto the trailer — and back out of town to make sure they were safe. "We were told the child the horse belonged to was extremely happy," says Poitras.

ESCAPING THE CITY

More than a thousand pets and livestock were left in place as their owners had to quickly evacuate the city, many without first returning home.

"There was a great deal of pressure from unofficial volunteer groups trying to get back in because they believed nothing was being done for the animals, which wasn't the case," says Roland Lines, communications manager for the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

The care of animals in Fort McMurray was the responsibility of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB). As the scope of the emergency increased dramatically in a short period of time, the municipality realized they needed to locate and take care of the animals that were abandoned.

Within two days of having to evacuate, the RMWB set up a system on their website where evacuees could report any animals that needed to be rescued. The online form also gave the RMWB permission to enter homes to rescue pets.

"The information went out over social media and was spread by word of mouth," says Matt Lowther, sergeant administrator with the municipality. "We received a lot of information about animals in need of rescue over a very short period of time."

The municipality had about 25 staff as well as volunteers from official rescue groups, like the Alberta SPCA, who the RMWB asked to assist. "It was quite the ordeal just to get organized," says Sgt. Rich Walkinshaw, RMWB bylaw services. "You don't realize how many pets you have in a community until you start doing it. We just became a big pet rescue company."

In total, they rescued and evacuated more than 1,200 animals. And another 250, mostly fish and reptiles, were cared for in place. Most of the animals that were evacuated were sent to a warehouse in Edmonton set up and run by the Alberta SPCA. There, the pets were re-united with their families.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

While the municipality saved all but 25 of the animals reported to them, this incident along with the Slave Lake forest fire in 2011 and the High River flood in 2013, confirmed the need for municipalities to have an animal emergency plan.

"All municipalities have emergency plans but nobody has thought in depth about animals," says Lowther. "This really brought it home that a plan is needed."

The RMWB, the Alberta SPCA and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry are now in preliminary discussions with the province to develop an animal emergency response package that municipalities in Alberta can choose to adopt. It will focus on several areas including communication, transportation, reunification, data management and media interaction.

In the future, this could mean that communities will be better prepared to deal with the animals. It will also increase the likelihood of successful animal rescue efforts.

"People care deeply about their pets," says Lowther. "It's important to have a plan in place, and for every individual to have a plan in place, to make sure that they look after their pets. But in the event an emergency happens and they can't, they'll know that emergency services will take care of them." ■

Chris Schwarz, Government of Alberta

RCMP officers check on the welfare of two horses in a corral on a property in the Fort McMurray area. During the wildfires, police assisted with abandoned animals when they could.

Marnie Peters

This live training exercise in a northern community is an example of how police and other first responders must develop response plans with all community members in mind.

VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

DOES YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN MEET EVERYONE'S NEEDS?

By Marnie Peters, accessibility consultant and project manager, the Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments, Ottawa

One of the greatest assets for first responders in Canada is the strong sense of community within each hamlet, town and city across the country. This sense of community is a strength that can and should be used when preparing for or responding to an emergency.

Informal networks are often already in place and can be helpful to police. Through them, community leaders and other individuals can help identify vulnerable populations and their emergency response needs.

Persons with disabilities and vulnerable persons may require additional time or alternate means to communicate their thoughts or may need assistance with their mobility during an emergency. They are a first responder's greatest resource to communicate what help they will need.

ORGANIZATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

To ensure that everyone in a community has access to the information they'll need to make informed decisions, strategies for emergency preparation, notification and response must take into account the needs and abilities of all residents. Using multiple means of communication serves to reduce dependence on any one method and gets the message out more effectively.

Police and other first responders, along with regional governments and relevant emergency management organizations, should actively consult and develop communication and response plans with community disability groups, home health care providers and others prior to an emergency. This will allow greater insight into the size and scope of the community of persons with disabilities and vulnerable population, and help identify what formal and informal response resources are available in any given community.

ENCOURAGE SELF SUFFICIENCY

Everyone in a community, with or without a disability, should be encouraged to prepare for an emergency beforehand. For persons with disabilities, their needs in an emergency can vary greatly and they may not be aware of which strategies are suitable or which services or resources are available to them.

There are national, provincial and territorial emergency preparedness guides and materials available that provide information for persons with disabilities, outlining the steps and strategies they might take during the different phases of an emergency. Know where to direct people — before an emergency.

There are a number of applications available for smartphones that may be useful during an emergency. For individuals with vision or auditory disabilities, there are tools

that can help to make information more accessible, such as apps that enable a smartphone to convert speech to text. Apps such as the Dragon Mobile Assistant, for example, allow a user to easily convert speech to text, which can then be stored in the phone, or sent as an SMS or email. Alternately, there are many IP Relay apps that can call and relay typed messages in a voice format.

COMMUNICATING

Communication is a vital component of emergency preparedness and response. Ensuring that everyone has the information they need to effectively prepare for and safely respond to an emergency or disaster can mean the difference between life and death.

For persons with disabilities, accessing timely information can be particularly challenging even when all traditional means and communication systems are working properly. Unfortunately, their unique communication needs are often overlooked in general emergency communication responses.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing can't hear radio, television, sirens or other audible alerts. For people who are blind or have low vision, visual cues such as flashing lights or scrolling text messages on television or signboards will not be helpful.

For many of Canada's northern and remote communities, radio is the first place that residents turn to for information. Because television programming is often based in the south, many communities throughout the territories and northern areas of the provinces have local radio stations that residents rely on for timely information. Ensure that community liaisons are established with the relevant stakeholders. They may be the help you need in an emergency.

Large first-responder organizations are still addressing how to capitalize on the use of social media, which has become one of the most common ways that people access information, communicate with family and friends and, in some cases, seek help during emergencies. In fact, one third of Canadians report that their preferred method of gaining information during an emergency is electronically. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (among other web services) should be considered important tools in managing emergencies.

SIGNAGE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Police and other first responders should produce and maintain a library of emergency messages in multiple accessible formats, such as visual, large print and Braille. During an emergency, there won't be time to develop accessible formats. Preparing this ahead of time will ensure information can get to everyone in a timely and accessible manner. For example, a one-page handout with six simple illustrations can be used to provide evacuation notification and information on where to shelter.

Written notices and announcements can be posted in public areas where they will be widely seen and understood. They can be easily changed or updated as circumstances unfold, and can provide a rallying point for members of the community to congregate if posted in a central location such as an arena, school or church.

Announcements should be clearly written using plain language, in relevant languages, in large print, and using sans serif fonts (Arial, Verdana, Calibri). The text should also have a strong colour contrast with the background. Consider using pictograms instead of text.

Written announcements aren't accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision, and should never be the only means of communication. Emerging technologies allow documents to be quickly translated into Braille or audio MP3s, which can then be easily listened to using a personal device.

A public address system presents an opportunity to communicate auditory announcements. If possible, video announcements, which could include captioning and/or sign language, may also be helpful for communicating in an inclusive way.

Once again, there is no single, prescribed method. The needs and circumstances of the community and the size and scale of the emergency will shape the best approach. Most often, a variety of methods should be used.

HOW TO HELP IN AN EMERGENCY

It's important that police know how best to assist a person with a disability. This contributes to the safety, respect and comfort of everyone involved. Consider the following:

- Be patient and stay calm.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Be prepared to try alternate means of communication.
- Ask before assisting.
- Allow the person to direct you.

RECOGNIZE, REACT, IMPROVISE

Best practices in emergency response often mean paying special attention to using multiple and alternative means of communications, both technological and low-technology methods.

Scenario: While conducting door-to-door evacuation notifications of a neighbourhood in the path of a forest fire, a person answers the door who clearly can't understand your scripted evacuation message. It's unclear if the person is deaf, hard of hearing or if there's a language barrier. Time is of the essence.

Regardless of the language used, the spoken word isn't always the best way to convey the message. Think fast — most of us have played charades at some point in our lives. When we travel to foreign countries where we don't speak the language, body language and motions are often all we can rely on to communicate. Use body language and improvized sign language to convey your message.

Nearly everyone today carries a work or personal mobile smartphone. You can type out a brief message using the note or chat feature and share your screen to show the message. This use of existing, on-hand technology is the fastest and easiest way to facilitate a two-way conversation if you think the person is deaf or hard of hearing.

When communicating a message in an emergency, it's all about conveying your message in the quickest way possible so that it's understood by the other party. As a first responder, adapting and improvising can mean the difference to getting your message across and ensuring a good outcome for everyone. ▪

This article has been drafted in part from materials developed as part of the On Thin Ice Project, *funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program and managed by The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments.*

Calgary Police Service

During the 2013 Calgary flood, both internal and external communication platforms played a pivotal role in keeping the public and police officers informed on the developing disaster.

COMMUNICATION CRITICAL

PREPARATION KEY DURING CALGARY FLOOD RESPONSE

By Cst. Mark Smith,
digital communications officer,
Calgary Police Service

In June 2013, Calgary along with much of southern Alberta was hit by some of the worst flooding witnessed in over 100 years. Many communities were devastated by the rising waters and thousands of people evacuated from their homes. Priority during any disaster is the protection of life. Maintaining real-time communications proved crucial during the Calgary flood.

Social media played an instrumental role in providing updated information to citizens left bewildered by the rapidly rising water. However, along with this easily accessible information came many rumours and false information. To mitigate this problem, many City of Calgary departments took to social media in an attempt to keep on top of the influx of questions and trending information.

The Calgary Police Service (CPS) began its social media presence in 2010 and, by the beginning of 2013, had reached 20,000 Twitter followers and 10,000 Facebook followers. The objective was to use social media to share important crime prevention messages and to engage local online communities. To achieve this, the service implemented two sworn constables into the role of digital communications officers (this grew to three members in 2017).

During this growth period, the service also developed an internal communications portal to help keep members informed about ongoing incidents and relevant service information. This included developing an internal newsroom platform for publishing all news releases and relevant service information. During the 2013 Calgary flood, both these internal and external communication platforms played a pivotal role in keeping the public and CPS members informed on the developing disaster.

The Calgary Police Service's first flood communication was in response to a request from local High River RCMP. The town of High River was overcome with rising waters and communications shut down in the immediate area leaving people stranded and needing immediate evacuation. The RCMP liaised with the CPS communications team and requested social media assistance to ask the public for rescue equipment such as front loaders and motorized boats.

These initial social media posts reached an audience of half a million people and demonstrated the power of this new communications platform. Within one week during the 2013 flood, the CPS social media following doubled in numbers. Shortly after, the communications team was transitioned into the operations centre at police headquarters in preparation for the encroaching flood.

TIMELY, TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Once the rising waters reached the City of Calgary, online requests for information began pouring in. Hampering the situation was a directive from command to all communications teams advising that no information be released without prior approval. By the time a question was received and the information was relayed and returned for distribution, it was already out of date. As a result, pressure was successfully applied to change this directive and allow for two-way information sharing. This was an important step in re-assuring the public, who began receiving timely responses rather than a cone of silence.

When the public's questions were at a peak, one technical drawback occurred: the Calgary Police Service's Twitter account was locked down. This occurs if too many messages are sent from one account and became known

as "Twitter Jail." Luckily the account was reinstated within an hour with help from the local Calgary community and Twitter support.

The Calgary Police Service also brought in additional civilian members from other units to assist with answering questions online. These members had previously received basic social media training in preparation for disaster scenarios. At any given time during the flood, there was at least one social media officer assigned within the police operations centre allowing for the continuous sharing of critical information 24 hours a day.

To maintain this coverage, the digital communications officers began working a modified 24-hour shift pattern, often lasting up to 19 hours in duration. Working alongside these officers were the police service's media liaison members. They continued to work closely with the media and took ownership of updating service members via the internal newsroom. The advantage of both communications teams working together was that all distributed messages externally and internally remained accurate and concise.

A key tool to keeping communications staff updated throughout the flood was the use of email distribution lists. Every hour on the hour, internal updates were provided by all service departments including police, fire, water and roads to communication staff members using email distribution lists. At the same time, the emergency operations centre used a living emergency mapping tool accessible by communication members. These maps displayed real-time closed or flooded roads, inaccessible communities and many other important disaster-related information. This allowed for most questions from the public to be answered quickly and accurately.

Social media during the flood became the information portal for members of the public. In the first two days, CPS received 7,060 questions via Twitter alone. By end of week, that number had grown to more than 35,000. Although the service was unable to respond to every inquiry, certain social media techniques allowed for responses to be viewed by all social media followers. This meant that one response could help answer a question being asked by other community members.

READYING FOR THE NEXT DISASTER

Many lessons were learned as a result of the Calgary flood relating to internal and external communications. The Calgary Police Service did not have a call-out system in place prior to the disaster and as a result struggled to contact officers for additional support. Since this event, every member of the service has been issued a work phone and is now added to a service wide call-out list for future disaster situations.

Early during the flood, members realized that IT equipment installed within the police operations centre was unable to cope with the various social media requirements. As a result, the equipment needed to be updated during the first hours of the disaster. Luckily the process was resolved quickly but every organization should continuously check and update all equipment to avoid this scenario.

Another lesson learned from the flood was not to restrict communications members during a disaster. It's extremely important to listen and respond to the community especially early into a crisis. Often, the public just wants to be heard and a simple reply "we don't know, but we will have an update soon" is all that's required. This creates a situation where both the public and the media know where to go for accurate and reliable real-time information.

All emergency response agencies must understand the importance of providing accurate real-time information via social media. It requires proper training of personnel on social media and the organization should begin building a social media presence prior to any disaster. This online presence pre-disaster is a priority for any organization and allows the public to learn what official channels should be relied upon during a disaster. However, this does entail accepting a certain degree of accountability, mostly for police services.

Organizations should explore whether their accounts will be monitored 24-7 and what liability exists if a threat is made and no action is taken. Another factor to consider involves how to train social media operators and determining what restrictions should be imposed.

Agencies should also consider how many social media accounts they need, and not to jump too far ahead of what they can handle. Training is a huge part of successfully operating on social media. Members need to be continually educated on the changing face of social media platforms. Other interested members of the organization should be identified and provided some degree of social media training for use during a future disaster.

As of January 2017, the CPS has more than 160,000 Twitter followers and 85,000 Facebook followers. This is in stark contrast to pre-flood numbers and will pose significant challenges should a future disaster occur. To alleviate potential issues, the organization has officially verified all their social media accounts and implemented an online communications plan. Additional personnel continue to be trained on the use of social media and equipment is continually upgraded to mitigate future problems.

Calgary police continue to use new social media tools including Facebook community block watch groups. These groups, often set up by community members, allow for the sharing of information specific to a geographical location. Currently the Calgary police digital communications members actively participate in 50 such groups. This has resulted in increased community awareness, information sharing and education. Should a future disaster occur, it's anticipated these groups will be heavily relied upon to provide timely and accurate updates.

Social media is a valuable communications tool if used correctly. It's important for police agencies to be part of the many conversations that are taking place, ideally well before the next disaster occurs. ■

Developing an online presence prior to a disaster, like the 2013 Calgary flood, allows the public to learn what official channels should be relied upon during an incident.

Calgary Police Service

HEIGHTENED AWARENESS

TRAINING PREPARES RCMP EMPLOYEES FOR ACTIVE THREAT

By Amelia Thatcher

Quebec RCMP are training employees for an active threat event using an online preventative measures guide, awareness video and training exercises.

Photo: June Laflamme, RCMP

A man approaches the RCMP's commercial crimes building in Montreal, Que., attracting a few suspicious glances. He slips through an open back door, then starts shooting.

"The reality of today's times is that police are targets," says Cpl. William Demeau, an investigator in the commercial crimes building. "We need to be ready for anything."

The simulated shooting was part of a training exercise to improve employee response in emergency situations. It's one of several new measures Quebec RCMP are taking to prepare their ranks for facing a new reality: active shooters targeting police.

"Before, we made procedures just in case," says François Viens, operational support co-ordinator who's spearheading the initiative. "Now, we have to push the envelope further. Active shooters are becoming more prevalent."

EDUCATING EMPLOYEES

Violent encounters with police and military are not unfamiliar in Canada — in 2014, a suspect rammed two military officers with his vehicle in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Que., killing one of them. Days later, an attacker shot a Canadian soldier at the War Memorial in Ottawa before storming Parliament Hill with his weapon.

Following those attacks, Quebec RCMP assigned Viens the role of preparing all employees — both police officers and civilian workers — for a potential attack on their buildings.

He created an online directive for employees: a *Guide of Preventive Measures in the Event of an Active Threat*. The document provides step-by-step directions to civilian employees, police officers, building security and operational command centre workers during the first minutes of an active threat event.

"When you have up to 200 police officers in a building who can respond to an incident, it's very different than a situation at a shopping mall or airport, which has mostly civilians," says Viens. "We're trying to give police employees the best tools to respond in our work environment."

To increase employee interest and engagement, Viens also produced an awareness video. The five-minute clip shows a dramatization of an active shooter entering a police headquarters building, and demonstrates how employees should respond.

"We wanted to create a tool that was more compelling than an awareness poster," he says. "It gives an overall view of what employees need to do. It's not a tactics video — it's for everyone in the RCMP."

For detachments that want to prepare further, Viens is working with Emergency Response Team specialists Cpl. Alain Benjamin and Sgt. Jean Dion to lead formal lockdown drills, like the one at the commercial crimes building in Montreal. With divisional buy-in and support from detachments, they're visiting each RCMP building across the province to test their active threat procedures.

"The plan is alive, so we can customize it to the environment," says Benjamin. "We have some detachments with fewer people or with more civilians, some in big cities or in rural towns . . . we tweak it to the reality of the place."

CONFIDENT IN A CRISIS

Before beginning the exercise at the commercial crimes building in Montreal, Viens and Benjamin showed the awareness video to all staff. Then, they brought in the RCMP's training unit in Quebec to make sure all officers in the building were up to speed on Immediate Action Rapid Deployment (IARD) training.

On the day of the event, Emergency Response Team and Emergency Medical Response Team members assisted employees and answered any last-minute questions. They locked down the perimeter and made sure no live ammunition was on the premises before starting.

"We didn't know what the incident would be, or where it would originate," says Demeau, who participated in the exercise. "We just reacted."

As soon they heard the gunshots, Demeau and three other RCMP officers used their IARD training and moved towards the threat. Before the shooter could get any further, they took him down.

"It was a really good eye-opener for people," he says. "It gave us an idea of how quickly things can happen and the procedures we have to follow. I think people are more aware and in-tune with what needs to happen now."

After the exercise, Viens and Benjamin debriefed the building, offering recommendations to employees to improve their response.

"The expectation is that police will be ready for any situation at all times," says Benjamin. "We're helping them prepare. Whether it's for a terrorist attack or a single active shooter, we need to have procedures in place to maintain the public's confidence." ■

just THE FACTS

SURROGACY

For many childless couples and individuals, surrogacy can provide one of the only ways of having a genetically related child. But, this fast-growing and increasingly global industry has no international guidelines. The surrogacy debate is at the intersection of law, ethics, science and public policy, prompting countries to take different stances on the controversial topic.

Surrogacy is the practice in which a woman bears a child on behalf of another woman — either from her own egg fertilized by the other woman's partner, or from the implantation in her uterus of a fertilized egg from the other woman.

The first successful in-vitro fertilization (IVF) procedure happened in 1978, beginning the now-widespread surrogacy industry. Since then, the practice has seen a steep increase — it's estimated that half of all surrogate births have happened over the last six years.

Surrogacy laws vary worldwide. Some countries choose to regulate the practice, while others have decided to ban all forms of surrogacy. Countries that don't allow surrogate births include China, Germany, Italy and Japan.

Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands and United Kingdom permit altruistic surrogacy, where the surrogate does not receive financial gain, and is only paid for the expenses accrued during the pregnancy.

In Canada, it's illegal to pay (in cash, goods or services) a surrogate mother under the *Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) Act*. But, a surrogate can be repaid for out-of-pocket costs (with a receipt) directly related to her pregnancy: maternity clothes, food, travel for medical appointments and medications.

Violation of the *AHR Act* can cost those paying for reproductive services a penalty of up to $500,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years.

February 2013 marked the first time Canada's *AHR Act* was enforced. The RCMP charged Leila Picard of the Canadian Fertility Consultants for buying or offering to buy sperm or eggs and the services of a surrogate mother, while also taking money to arrange those services.

India, Ukraine, Russia and some U.S. states have commercialized surrogacy, where the surrogate is paid for her services on top of reimbursement for expenses.

Outsourcing commercial surrogate birth abroad (reproductive tourism) is a controversial topic. Many suggest the practice can exploit women in poorer countries who are given too little compensation compared to women in more developed countries for the same services. That's why India banned foreign commercial surrogacy in October 2015.

A successful surrogate pregnancy can cost up to $120,000 in the U.S., and can be even higher if multiple IVF attempts are required. In India, a surrogate birth costs much less: around $30,000.

The Permanent Bureau of the Hague estimates that the industry grew by 1,000 per cent internationally between 2006 and 2010. Today, commercial surrogacy is estimated to be a US$6 billion industry worldwide.

While most surrogate clients are married heterosexual couples with a medical need for surrogacy, intended parents can also include married and unmarried same-sex couples and single men and women.

Surrogate agreements are contracts that outline the rights of surrogate mothers and intentional parents. The document usually stipulates that the surrogate mother will relinquish all rights to the child once it's born.

In the U.S., Michigan's *Surrogate Parenting Act* does not recognize surrogate contracts, meaning the surrogate has strong rights regarding custody of the child. Contrarily, laws in India do recognize the surrogate contract, providing more assurance for prospective parents.

Laws relating to surrogacy in different countries must all conform to the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Adoption Convention*, both of which focus on child rights and the obligation to prevent the abduction, sale or trafficking of children.

— Compiled by Amelia Thatcher

ACCESS GRANTED

LOCKBOX SOLVES ENTRY ISSUES WITH MULTI-FAMILY BUILDINGS

By Deidre Seiden

For first responders, getting into the locked front door of an apartment building can be a challenge, especially when seconds count.

Often, they resort to randomly calling people using the apartment's intercom system in the hope of being buzzed in, or, in a critical emergency, smashing their way in.

"People get upset with us when that happens, but it's the nature of emergency response," says Cpl. Kevin Krygier, Richmond RCMP. "We do what we have to do when someone's life is in danger."

And once they get into the lobby, that doesn't mean they can access the stairwell, each floor, the parking lot or the roof. "Locked doors are great for keeping bad guys out, but it means we're also stuck," says Krygier.

Krygier knew there had to be a better way and reached out to partner agencies for help. Richmond Fire-Rescue was eager to get involved.

"From an optics perspective, it's great to have a partner like the fire department, which is getting in there to save lives 100 per cent of the time," says Krygier. "If the police were managing the system, people might think they're being watched."

Together, Krygier and Deputy Fire Chief Kevin Gray looked for a way to help emergency responders quickly access these buildings.

SMART SOLUTION

They started by eliminating all the methods that had been tried in the past, but didn't work well. For instance, they knew that a physical key could get lost. "When that happens, the whole system is compromised," says Gray.

Armed with knowing what wouldn't work, they identified several requirements for a new program and searched the market for applicable technology.

They wanted the solution to have a digital fingerprint, whether an app or an e-key, and a way to track who's accessed the keys, and when.

What they found was a Bluetooth-enabled lockbox that uses a smartphone to open the box where keys or key fobs can be stored. And should the smartphone get lost, in addition to requiring a passcode to open the app, the app itself can be removed from the device remotely, adding increased security.

Further, every time the box is opened with the smartphone, a transaction gets sent to a database that's managed by the fire department.

While typical lockboxes are surface-mounted to the wall, this one is flush-mounted, making it virtually impenetrable.

ENHANCED SAFETY

Armed with a project plan, Gray and Krygier consulted with the Condominium Home Owners Association of B.C. and the City of Richmond. Both have endorsed the project, which should be up and running later this year.

City councillor Bill McNulty, Chair of the City Community Safety Committee, is also fully supportive. "Our number one priority is to have a safe community," says McNulty. "That means all aspects of safety and whatever we can do to improve things to make things safe for our residents. This particular initiative will provide quicker access to our first responders when people are in trouble."

While the project will be managed by Richmond Fire-Rescue, it will be up to property managers to buy and have the technology installed by approved locksmiths. Property managers will then be required to register the box with the program, sign the contract with the fire department and allow them to connect their devices and system with the lockbox.

For now, the lockbox project is entirely voluntary. "We aren't going to force anyone to get involved in this, we're going to encourage them because it prevents the potential for damage to the building and it enhances the safety of the residents in the building," says Krygier.

He adds that there are many ways first responders can improve the way they do things using technology, and this is a good example because it's very simple. "It's just a matter of us knowing what's out there, working with our partners and trying to leverage the tools that are available to us to benefit the community," says Krygier. ▪

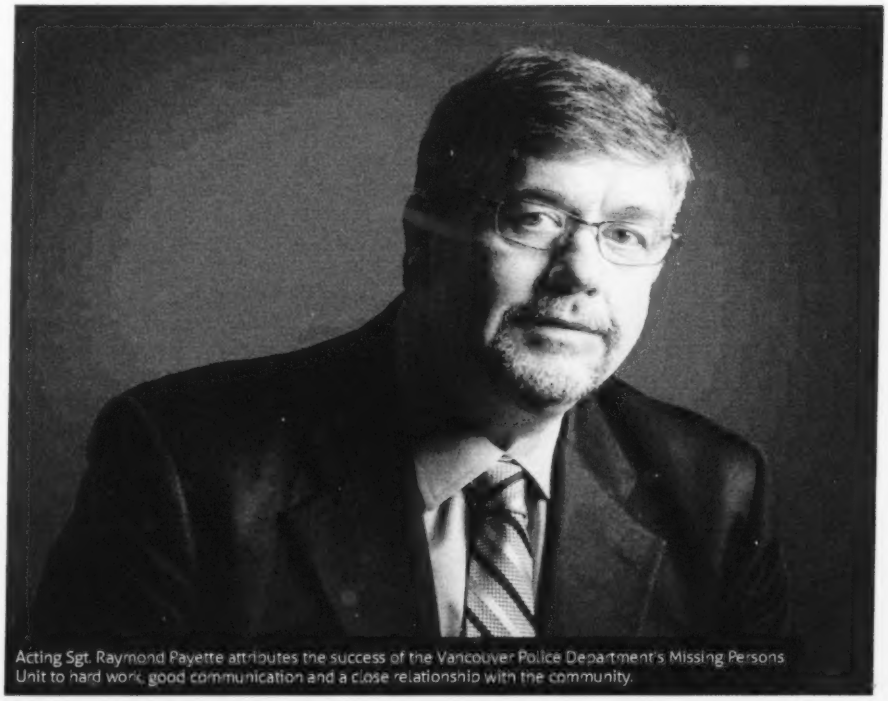
In multi-family homes, locked front doors can hinder a first responder from helping residents. RCMP and the fire department in Richmond, B.C., will use Bluetooth-enabled lockboxes to ensure a swift response.

Cpl. Kevin Krygier, RCMP

JUST KEEP DIGGING

SOLVING CASES WITH COMMON SENSE, COMMUNITY

Acting Sergeant Raymond Payette joined the Vancouver Police Department's Missing Persons Unit seven years ago. He has a clearance rate of 99.99 per cent and earned a reputation as an expert in missing person's investigations across Canada. He spoke with Deidre Seiden about his team's diligent work ethic and how his own family history motivates him.



Vancouver Police Department

Acting Sgt. Raymond Payette attributes the success of the Vancouver Police Department's Missing Persons Unit to hard work, good communication and a close relationship with the community.

YOU HAVE AN INCREDIBLY HIGH CLEARANCE RATE. HOW DO YOU DO IT?

I'm a short, chubby, French-Canadian guy. I don't run terribly fast. I'm a terrible shot. But I did take the service part of my oath very much to heart when I joined. I'm like a good dog on a bone: I keep going. And I think that's what my unit is. We're like little terriers. We just keep digging and digging and digging. We're a very dedicated group of four. We're lucky we have a dedicated unit. Just that fact plays a huge role in our success rate. It's high, but we don't find everyone alive.

WHAT'S CHALLENGING ABOUT THIS FIELD?

One of our challenges is volume. Everybody always wants to talk about the enormous file. The file where all of a sudden 47 people are working on it, which is very important, but that is the rare thing that happens. We worked on 5,600 files in 2016. We get 15 or 16 new files every day. Everybody forgets about the other 14 or 15 new cases a day. But those families are worried about their kid, mom or whomever, too.

HOW DO YOU KEEP UP WITH THE WORKLOAD?

My unit is full of outstanding investigators, but more important they're outstanding people. We care about the work. We talk about the files all the time, and that gives you a ton of different ideas on what to do. We have a very good ability to exchange opinions and information and not get offended. Nobody walks out of the room mad.

And we're good at triaging files — what's good, what's bad and what's really bad. I don't know if we have the best detectives in the world. I'm not the best detective in the world. I'm not the best detective on our floor, but I do think our ability to triage files and look at them critically and with common sense, I would put us up against any unit in Canada.

Finally, we work closely with the community. The Downtown Eastside is an enormous driver of a lot of policing and missing person's issues in the City of Vancouver. We have a lot of contacts there. We've worked very hard since I've been here to build those relationships.

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Before I became a police officer, I ran a restaurant, so I believe in customer service. I can say we give good customer service here. If a file goes long term and we meet the family in person, if something bad happens, we always do the next of kin notifications. It's important for us. A couple of families have said to me, "We don't want a stranger telling us our son has passed away." They don't really know who I am. They met me four weeks ago because I became the detective in charge of their file, but for those four weeks you become part of that family.

WHAT KEEPS YOU MOTIVATED?

Many years ago, my grandma's brother rented a sailboat. He was told that it doesn't look great out there, but he and his friend went out anyway. They never came back.

When I was kid, we had a boat. Anytime we'd go out on the water, you could tell my grandma was searching the water for him all those years later. She knew there was no realistic chance that she would ever find him, but it hung with her for her entire life.

People are tormented when their loved ones are missing. One of the most difficult things for a family, and one of the things our unit does a very good job of, is understanding that people are stuck. I view it as purgatory. They can't grieve because if they grieve they feel guilty because they don't know if the person is dead. At the same time, they can't move forward because they don't know.

They don't want to hear the worst, but they want to know what happened. Understanding this pushes me every day. ■

LATEST RESEARCH IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

The following are excerpts from recent research related to justice and law enforcement and reflect the views and opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of the organizations for which they work.

Compiled by Amelia Thatcher

SAMSON CREE NATION'S APPLICATION OF THE HUB MODEL

By Chad Nilson

In 2012, Alberta's Samson Cree Nation, in partnership with the Maskwacis RCMP detachment, began using the Hub model of collaborative risk-driven intervention to provide solutions to ongoing crime, violence, arson, addictions and truancy in the community. The Hub model is a venue for service providers from various sectors to meet one or more times a week to share limited information about their clients whose current situation meets a defined threshold of acutely elevated risk.

Several communities across Canada have adopted the Hub model to improve community safety and wellness. However, the Samson Cree Nation remains the only First Nation to have fully applied the model over an extended period of time.

The objectives of this study were to identify why the model was adapted in the Samson Cree Nation, whether it's consistent with evidence-based practices, how compliant the Samson Cree Nation is with established practices of the model, what lessons have been learned, and what benefits and challenges have been observed.

The primary means of data collection included interviews with various health and human service providers, police officers, band leaders and community stakeholders. In total, 18 individuals were interviewed. An additional source of data was the researcher's own observations of the Samson Cree Hub made during a visit in June 2015.

The interviews demonstrated considerable support for the model, and advocates suggested that the Hub model is a promising alternative to the status quo in First Nation communities.

The impact of collaborative risk-driven intervention on clients brought forth to the Hub include the early identification of risk, being connected to services sooner, receiving assistance with complex problems, being held more accountable, avoiding crisis, and receiving multi-agency support.

The impact of the Hub on agencies include increased collaboration, a chance to learn perspectives of other agencies, acquiring more tools to help clients, more effective and efficient service provisions, access to more information, an opportunity to be proactive, build better relations with clients and, for some agencies, see a reduction in repeat calls for service.

Finally, the impact of Hub on police includes diverting complex clients to more appropriate services, reduced calls for service, improved community relations, improved co-operation with other agencies, an opportunity to become proactive, and an improved perspective of the client and their needs.

The results of this study also show that the Hub model aligns very well with First Nation culture and traditions in addressing complex social issues. While no concrete outcome measures on the Samson Cree Hub are available at this point, the results of this study are promising.

READ THE FULL REPORT:
www.publicsafety.gc.ca

IMPROVING THE INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF STATE AND LOCAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES

By National Institute of Justice

In this study, researchers focused on the challenges faced in identifying, investigating and prosecuting trafficking cases at the state and local levels. The researchers' primary goal was to improve law enforcement efforts to locate victims of trafficking and prosecute their traffickers.

The researchers used multiple methodologies, including analysis of quantitative data from 140 closed human trafficking case records; analysis of in-depth interviews with 166 police, prosecutors, victim service providers and other court stakeholders; and descriptive analysis of information from incidents that were never classified as human trafficking but might contain elements of human trafficking.

They collected data in 12 study counties representing three different levels of state human trafficking legislation (none, basic or comprehensive), as well as states with and without federally funded human trafficking task forces.

The researchers identified challenges in three areas of human trafficking cases — identifying victims, investigating cases and prosecuting cases.

Challenges in identifying victims:

- The covert nature of the activity.
- Victims were unable or unwilling to seek help, and fear of law enforcement.
- A failure of police agencies and other first responders to train all officers/front-line individuals on how to recognize victims.

Challenges in investigating cases:

- Law enforcement agencies don't uniformly make human trafficking a priority.
- Many agencies don't have the resources needed to train, staff and investigate cases — especially patrol officers and first responders.
- Agencies don't have officers who are sufficiently trained in appropriate interviewing techniques or who have the foreign-language skills necessary to facilitate identification.
- Law enforcement officers were often unprepared to deal with the amount of trauma suffered by victims. Consequently, law enforcement often resorted to using tactics they would normally use on suspects, including the use of arrest to secure victim co-operation.

Challenges in prosecuting cases:

- State prosecutors were reluctant to use new human trafficking laws and instead charged offenders with offences they were more familiar with, such as

rape, kidnapping or pandering.
- No state prosecutor in the study had ever prosecuted a labour trafficking case. Background characteristics of the victims often influenced prosecutor decisions about charging, so most cases identified by local law enforcement were prosecuted federally.

The researchers provide several recommendations for improving the identification of human trafficking: prioritizing human trafficking identification in communities and law enforcement agencies, providing institutional resources specifically for human trafficking, and using proactive investigation strategies.

They also identified several strategies to improve investigations: providing adequate and comprehensive victim services — including adequate shelters, developing long-term plans to help survivors reintegrate into society, improving law enforcement training especially on interviewing techniques — and establishing open relationships between police and prosecutors.

READ THE FULL REPORT:
http://nij.gov/

METHAMPHETAMINE USE AND ACQUISITIVE CRIME

By Susan Goldsmid and Matthew Willis

Methamphetamine use among Australian police detainees is rising; but the impact of this rise on crime trends, and particularly on trends in acquisitive crime theft, is yet to be established. Identifying trends in and motivations for offending among methamphetamine users may assist law enforcement and policymakers to better target resources.

This paper examines the engagement in acquisitive crime, and perceived motivations for methamphetamine-driven crime, of a sample of Australian police detainees recruited in 2013 through the Drug Use Monitoring in Australia (DUMA) program.

Methods

Every quarter, the DUMA program conducts interviews with police detainees, at select locations across Australia, about their drug use and criminal offending. In 2013, data was collected in Perth, Adelaide and Brisbane and at two Sydney sites, Kings Cross and Bankstown.

A total of 1,146 police detainees were interviewed for the DUMA program in quarters 3 and 4 of 2013. Of these, 35.8 per cent of detainees reported using methamphetamine in the 30 days prior to their detention by police. This is a sufficiently large sample to allow comparison between detainees who used methamphetamine and those who did not.

Respondents were asked to provide basic demographic information including gender, age and Indigenous status. The charge(s) for which the detainee was being held in police custody at the time of interview was recorded for each respondent. They were also asked on how many of the previous 30 days they had used methamphetamine/speed/ice, alcohol, cannabis, heroin or ecstasy, along with how much of their income in the previous 30 days came from crime.

Results

This study provides further evidence of an association between methamphetamine use and criminal offending, particularly with property and drug-related crime. Both methamphetamine users and heroin users were approximately four times more likely than non-users to report obtaining income from acquisitive crime. Cannabis users were almost twice as likely as non-users to report generating income from acquisitive crime. This could indicate that the use of illicit drugs almost doubles the likelihood of a police detainee engaging in acquisitive crime. This may be driven by the illicit drug use itself, or by the demographic and socioeconomic factors that increase the likelihood of both illicit drug use and offending.

Methamphetamine users also reported deriving a significantly higher proportion of their income from crime than non-users. In addition, methamphetamine users reported their use played a contributing role in their offending, most commonly through intoxication or the need for money to purchase drugs.

Conclusion

Recognizing the impact of methamphetamine use on offending could assist police and government policymakers to proactively direct resources and implement strategies to combat any potential rise in offending that may be associated with a rise in the use of methamphetamine among offender populations. ■

Recognizing the relationship between methamphetamine use and acquisitive offences such as theft could help police and policymakers proactively combat crime.

READ THE FULL REPORT:
http://www.aic.gov.au

BEST PRACTICE

MAKING FIT HAPPEN

OFFICER INGENUITY TURNS GARAGE INTO GYM

By Amelia Thatcher

A snowblower, old tools and some garbage bags filled an old garage at the Kindersley, Sask., RCMP detachment. For many years — decades even — the single-car garage had been a dumping ground for things nobody knew what to do with. But that all changed when Sgt. Ray Blais arrived in September 2015.

"When I first got here, I was surprised because there was no fitness facility here, there was no equipment," he says. "I also noticed a detached garage here that was being used for all the wrong reasons — it was just gathering junk."

Blais decided to put the empty space to use. After a bit of research and several discussions with detachment staff, he put together a plan to transform the unused garage into a fitness facility for employees.

"There's an expectation for us to be fit and to not be a liability out there," says Blais, who's been a police officer for 31 years. "This job is physically and mentally demanding so we need to have spaces to stay healthy."

FUNDING FITNESS

To tackle the renovation, Blais called Fiona Vincent, manager of the Fitness and Lifestyle Unit for the RCMP in Saskatchewan. Vincent pointed Blais in the right direction for resources, and also provided a small grant to help Kindersley buy some new equipment.

"Our goal is to create environments that are open and welcoming and encourage people to live a healthy lifestyle," says Vincent. "Investing in someone's health and well-being helps everyone, it percolates out. A healthier person is a happier person and they're more engaged in their work."

In 2016, the Saskatchewan Fitness and Lifestyle Unit helped more than 40 detachments upgrade their fitness facilities. While not every project is as extensive as creating a full gym, the program provides funding for new fitness equipment in detachments throughout the province.

For Vincent, creating workout spaces isn't just about keeping RCMP officers and employees physically fit — it's also about mental health, emotional health and promoting healthy lifestyles.

"By being healthier, we're not only physically prepared to meet the tasks of our job but it helps with cognitive function," she says. "It helps us to be sharper, concentrate more, have better judgment, improve resiliency and even sleep better."

Vincent says her goal is to make the healthiest choice the easiest choice for employees. Cst. Daniel Earle, a member of the Kindersley detachment says convenience has been his biggest motivation for hitting the new gym.

"It's the ease of access right at the office, you can work out before shift or after shift . . . it makes it a little easier," he says. "Here, I can work out with my co-workers, my shift-mates, and get them excited about going to the gym, too."

A CREATIVE SOLUTION

After a plan for the new gym was confirmed by the Kindersley detachment and the Fitness and Lifestyle Unit, Blais rounded up some co-workers to clean out the cluttered space.

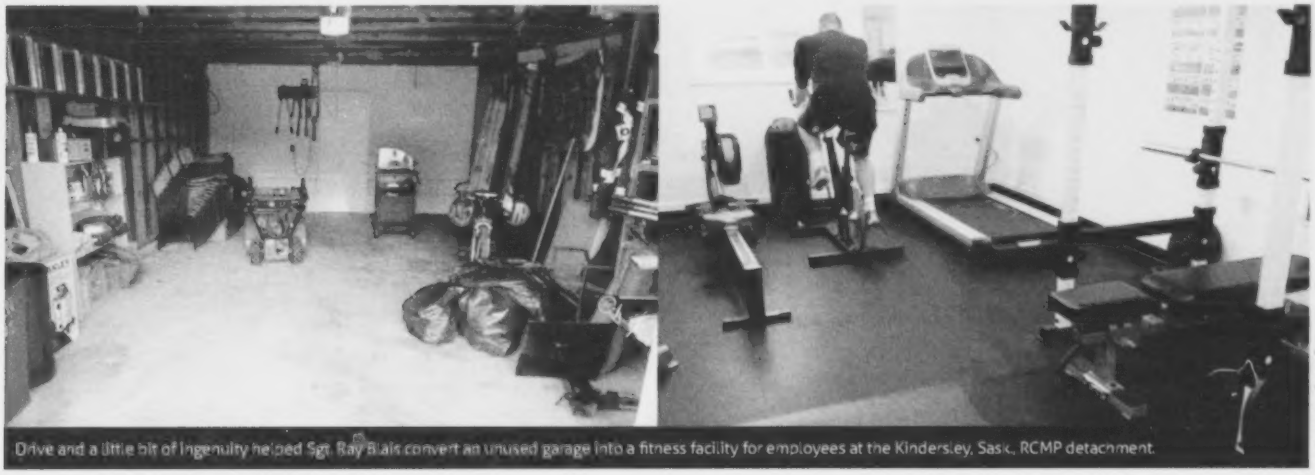
To make the most of his funding, Blais didn't buy all of the fitness equipment new. He approached Depot, the RCMP's national training facility, to see about getting second-hand equipment. They obliged, and helped fill the new gym with refurbished workout machines.

"Ray is very forward thinking and creative," says Vincent. "He was able to tap into so many different resources to pull this off."

Within less than a year of Blais' arrival, the gym was complete. While the space may be small, the gym has it all: a rowing machine, stationary bike, treadmill, elliptical and universal weight machine with a squat rack.

Since the new fitness facility opened in fall 2016, it's made a big difference for employees. In fact, Blais had to create a schedule for the gym, since so many people wanted to use the space.

"It's had an exceptional impact. I've seen quite a few people using the gym who wouldn't have otherwise — and regularly," says Earle. "Now we can expend some energy at the gym and be better fit for our jobs, both mentally and physically." ■



Drive and a little bit of ingenuity helped Sgt. Ray Blais convert an unused garage into a fitness facility for employees at the Kindersley, Sask., RCMP detachment.

Sgt. Ray Blais, RCMP